

## O Death, Where is Your Victory; 1 Corinthians 15:54-58

### I. Death

- A. We see death through a limited lens — a departure because they are no longer with us
    - 1. We have built a relationship with the one who has departed and we are sad that we can no longer have their company
    - 2. But, throughout Scripture, the only death that has any importance is spiritual
  - B. We first become acquainted with death in the Garden of Eden
    - 1. Genesis 2:15–17 (ESV); <sup>15</sup> The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. <sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”
    - 2. It is very easy to see death through our limited lens — if they eat of the fruit they will die (a physical death) — even the first people created had a misconception of death
    - 3. But physical death is not what God is concerned about
    - 4. Genesis 3:4–7 (ESV); <sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” <sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.
  - C. This poem by Mary Elizabeth Frye begins to touch the meaning of death
    - 1. Do not stand at my grave and weep, I am not there; I do not sleep.
    - 2. I am a thousand winds that blow, I am the diamond glints on snow, I am the sun on ripened grain, I am the gentle autumn rain.
    - 3. When you awaken in the morning's hush, I am the swift uplifting rush, Of quiet birds in circled flight. I am the soft stars that shine at night.
    - 4. Do not stand at my grave and cry, I am not there; I did not die.
  - D. To God death is not physical, but spiritual
    - 1. God is Spirit (John 4:24)
    - 2. We were made in their image (Genesis 1:26)
    - 3. Our physical being is not made in God's image — our spiritual being is made in God's image
    - 4. In the Garden God had a special relationship with man, one that both were together
    - 5. After Adam and Eve sinned, that relationship was gone — mankind is now separated from God
    - 6. This is the death that concerns God — this death is what caused God to offer a sacrifice that would bring us back into complete communion with Him
    - 7. After we read of that separation in Genesis chapter three, the rest of the Scriptures tell us how we get back into communion with God
  - E. Our physical death is not an end, but a beginning — for we are imperishable!
- ### II. Imperishable
- A. 1 Corinthians 15:53 (ESV); For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.
  - B. The physical body is perishable
    - 1. We are “born to die”
    - 2. From the moment of our birth we begin to age
    - 3. We often can't wait to reach certain ages — 10 (ID card), 18 (adult), 25 (insurance), 55 (senior citizen discount), 65 (social security benefits)
    - 4. James 4:13–15 (ESV); <sup>13</sup> Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”— <sup>14</sup> yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist

- that appears for a little time and then vanishes. <sup>15</sup> Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”
- C. The Spiritual body is imperishable
1. Eternity is a long time!
  2. We spend too much time making decisions for our physical body and not enough time making decision for our spiritual body
  3. Colossians 3:1–4 (ESV); <sup>1</sup> If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.
- D. “We will all be changed”
- III. The Victory
- A. Revelation 14:13 (ESV); And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”
- B. Blessed — being fortunate or happy because of circumstances; privileged <sup>1</sup>
- C. 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 (ESV); <sup>13</sup> But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. <sup>15</sup> For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Therefore encourage one another with these words.
- D. “Uninformed” — Paul is about to correct some erroneous thinking about death
1. Our grieving should be different than the worlds
    - a) Our knowledge of eternity — salvation — changes our mindset
    - b) We are no longer worried about physical death, but Spiritual death
    - c) I often think about my son, Elijah — I would love to have him back, but I would not wish for one minute that he leave the glory of heaven and come to this earth with all its heartache and temptations
    - d) We should celebrate a Christians transition from this earth to heaven
  2. When Jesus comes again, we will all be with Him — forever!
    - a) Those of us who have the Holy Spirit as our seal, dwelling in us — the mark of a Christian — will be caught up in the air
    - b) Those whose physical bodies have failed will go first, then the rest
  3. This should be a source of encouragement — for those who ‘die in the lord’
- E. Changing our mindset can be tough
1. It does not mean we won’t miss them terribly
  2. It does not mean we don’t love them immensely
  3. It means we are happy that they have won the race, received the crown
  4. 2 Timothy 4:6–8 (ESV); <sup>6</sup> For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. <sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

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<sup>1</sup> William Arndt et al., A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 610.

F. Death has no victory over a Christian!

IV. A Promotion

A. For a Christian death is a promotion — from the physical body to the spiritual body

B. We have remained steadfast — even in the face of death

C. Our labor is not in vain!

D. 1 Corinthians 15:54–58 (ESV); <sup>54</sup> When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” <sup>55</sup> “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” <sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>58</sup> Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.